

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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DRAFTED BY ARA/AND/B - MR. PACE:LEE
APPROVED BY S/NM - MS. FALCO
-----291956Z 022446 /43

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, BL

SUBJECT: PARENTS MEETING WITH S/NM ON AMERICAN PRISONERS
IN BOLIVIA

1. S/NM (MS. MATHEA FALCO) MET WITH A DELEGATION OF
PARENTS OF US CITIZEN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA ON MARCH 25.
CHIEF SPOKESMAN FOR PARENTS WAS DR. WILLIAM FARMER.
PARENTS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY STAFF AIDE FROM OFFICE OF
SENATOR TOWER.

2. MS. FALCO NOTED THAT PRISONERS ISSUE WAS ONE OF FIRST
PROBLEMS SHE ENCOUNTERED UPON ASSUMING HER PRESENT POST.
SHE SPOKE WITH COLONEL APARICIO SEVERAL TIMES ON THIS POINT
DURING RECENT GENEVA MEETINGS, STRESSING INTEREST OF US
GOVERNMENT IN SPEEDY DISPOSITION OF PRISONER CASES, WITHIN
THE BOLIVIAN LEGAL SYSTEM. IN RESPONSE, COLONEL
APARICIO ASSURED MS. FALCO HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO
ACCELERATE PROCESS OF JUSTICE. IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING IN
OUR DESIRE TO END "APPALLING DELAY" IN DISPOSITION OF THESE
CASES. AGAIN, APARICIO EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF
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LEGITIMATE USG CONCERNS, PROMISING TO PLAY A MAJOR PERSONAL
ROLE IN RESOLVING CASES. MS. FALCO ADDED THAT SHE HAS
FOLLOWED PROGRESS ON THIS ISSUE IN SUBSEQUENT CABLE TRAFFIC,

AND IS ENCOURAGED BY RECENT MOVES TO UNBLOCK LOGJAM OF
CASES. SHE EXPRESSED HER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARENTS'
SENTIMENT THAT NO PROGRESS CAN BE FAST ENOUGH FOR THEIR

SATISFACTION.

3. IN RESPONSE, DR. FARMER STATED THAT MS. FALCO WAS FIRST DEPT. OFFICIAL PARENTS HAD MET WHO WAS UNDERSTANDING AND NOT DEFENSIVE ABOUT THIS MATTER. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT MS. FALCO'S PREDECESSOR HAD "CREATED A MONSTER" BY HIS DESIRE TO IMPLEMENT A WORLD-WIDE POLICY OF PLACING HIGH PRIORITY ON DRUG CONTROL. AS A RESULT, COLONEL APARICIO NOW HOLDS A "FIEFDOM WHICH IS FINANCIALLY DEPENDENT ON THE US GOVERNMENT." DR. FARMER ADDED THAT "OUR CHILDREN, UNTIL NOW, ARE PRISONERS OF THE US GOVERNMENT." PRIOR TO 1973, HE STATED, BOLIVIA HAD A TRADITION OF RESOLVING CRIMINAL CASES INVOLVING FOREIGNERS BY EXPULSION. BUT SINCE THE PASSAGE OF DRUG CONTROL LEGISLATION IN THAT YEAR, THE US GOVERNMENT HAS DISCOURAGED A SOLUTION OF THE PRISONERS' SITUATION VIA DEPORTATION. INSTEAD, IT PREFERS THAT US CITIZEN PRISONERS GO THROUGH JUDICIAL SYSTEM TO OBTAIN JUSTICE UNDER BOLIVIAN LAW. THE PARENTS FEEL THIS IS SLOWING THE PROCESS. IF US OFFICIALS SPEAK OF A LACK OF CONFLICT BETWEEN DRUG CONTROL AND SPEEDY JUSTICE, THEY ARE MISTAKEN. BOLIVIA IS A COUNTRY WHERE US CITIZENS CANNOT OBTAIN JUSTICE, UNDER THE PRESENT NARCOTICS LAW. DR. FARMER WENT ON TO DESCRIBE PROPOSED COCA CROP SUBSTITUTION IN BOLIVIA AS "A STARK CASE OF CULTURAL INVASION" WHICH WOULD DESTROY THE INDIGENOUS QUECHUA AND AYMARA CULTURES. HE SAID THE USG SHOULD MAKE A DETERMINED EFFORT TO EXTRICATE THE US CITIZEN PRISONERS. IT HAS NOT DONE SO TO DATE, DUE TO AN OVERRIDING INTEREST IN CONTROLLING THE DRUG TRAFFIC. US CITIZENS CONTINUE TO BE HELD THERE TO JUSTIFY

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SUCH A POLICY. HE EXPRESSED HIS DETERMINATION TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN US INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL POLICIES IN THIS AREA. IN CONCLUSION, DR. FARMER EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD WELCOME A USG INITIATIVE FAVORING DEPORTATION.

CHRISTOPHER

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